



**Vermont State Workforce Development Board**

Manufacturing Committee - Meeting Minutes

April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Daniel Isaac, Robynn Albert, Veronica Newton, Brian Carpenter, Mark Ray

**Guests in Attendance:** Victoria Biondolillo, Abigail Rhim

Executive Director Victoria Biondolillo began the meeting at 1:03 pm. She told the group that the purpose of this meeting is to develop a strategic plan of the committee with step-by-step guidelines of where the committee should go. Additionally, she noted that the group must select a committee chair. Although this won't likely require any additional help on the selected person's part, it is necessary in order to vote in the future. She then referenced a rough draft of a roadmap, created by herself and Executive Assistant, Abby Rhim.

Veronica Newton of Generator asked if Mary Anne Sheahan of the Vermont Talent Pipeline has done any pipeline development related to manufacturing.

Victoria Biondolillo noted that Mary Anne is mainly focused on healthcare currently, however, we could bring her in if we were to do pipeline development related to manufacturing. Victoria then shared her screen to sketch a collaborative roadmap and asked participants what their end goal is for strengthening the Vermont manufacturing sector.

Daniel Isaac mentioned his business, J.K. Adams, wanting to recruit reliable and motivated employees.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed that it is likely most employers' concern that they just simply need reliable folks in their workplace, not employees with a specific skillset. She then asked the group if there could be a quantifiable identifier related to this goal.

Daniel Isaac recommended that the end point be to place 141,000 manufacturing positions.

Victoria Biondolillo summarized the goal to be placing "x" number of workers and creating a sustainable pipeline for manufacturing. She then said that we must identify where the sector is currently to understand the need. She suggested taking an initial step by asking Robynn Albert of the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center (VMEC) if we could get a sample of data from manufacturers in VMEC's database. She then summarized this as "identifying the scope" or step one.

Veronica Newton noted a few pilot programs currently taking place at Generator, including an introduction to digital manufacturing course for students 18 and older. She noted that while these programs are great, how do we position ourselves so courses like these are seen as a stepping stone or entry point to a potential job.

Victoria Biondolillo noted that the course could be a piece of a pipeline. She shared that if a guidance counselor could utilize a course at Generator, all parties in the workforce space would then know potential next steps towards a career down the road for that student. She also noted being able to identify what training and services are available now and what is available to workers.

Daniel Isaac then advocated for an immigration and refugee campaign. He also noted supporting those who are already in Vermont.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed and said that we should also shift the narrative to be that immigrants and refugees can come here and get on a track to have a great career. There are many lucrative opportunities, we just need to identify how to market and support the endeavors.

Daniel Isaac noted the work the state already does with people with disabilities and how the same support and services could apply to immigrants and refugees.

Victoria Biondolillo then asked the group what other issues need to be identified in terms of being an employer in the manufacturing space.

Veronica Newton noted the cost of trainings. She asked that the group identify what funding is available to support employers.

Victoria Biondolillo then asked the group what are the bare minimum competencies that manufacturers are looking for in potential employers and what training needs to be done to get them to that level.

Daniel Isaac then brought up relocation incentives and how to raise awareness of these opportunities.

Mark Ray then brought up the issue of housing. He asked if there was a service within the state to help potential employers relocate.

Victoria Biondolillo then noted a recent proposal from the Governor to create a relocation center to help with housing. She added that the responsibility of helping employees relocate shouldn't be employers' burden.

Daniel Isaac then added the idea of a seasonal employee campaign.

Victoria Biondolillo then advised the group to think of the bigger picture after identifying the problem. If we know how many workers we need, what is our next step as a committee?

Brian Carpenter noted that we need to get schools to support businesses regarding on-the-job training and experiential learning. The focus can't just be on sending kids to college. He also noted the demographics challenge. He urged the group to focus on bringing people into Vermont. Those who want to work in Vermont already have a job. There are other issues that need to be addressed before looking at the workforce system.

Victoria Biondolillo agreed. She noted that if the ARPA funding related to housing does not pass, we will not be able to address the workforce. She added that we need to start looking at tapping into our existing Vermonters, including older workers, and rebranding manufacturing. She stressed the need to push manufacturing as an innovative industry.

Daniel Isaac noted that the three key things are placing, training and retaining.

Victoria Biondolillo liked his three key points. She added that the committee could break down the identification of scope into placement goals, training goals and then retention practices. She then added that she will flush out the working document of next steps and distribute it to the group to review. She added that the identification of scope will be presented for feedback at the next meeting.

Brian Carpenter then asked for clarification of the data presented in the original roadmap document pertaining to the listed job posting ratio.

Victoria Biondolillo shared that it was based off of Vermont JobLink so it is not the most accurate. There is a lag in the system and it does not include postings beyond Vermont JobLink. She added that we can collect better data from VMEC and their partners.

Brian Carpenter then asked for clarification on Vermont JobLink and who runs the site.

Victoria Biondolillo confirmed that it is a state sponsored job posting site. She added that the State Workforce Development Board is working on a contract with a recruitment company to further promote jobs on multiple partnering sites. She added that we can then use the data collected by the recruitment company to help with placement efforts within the state. She then wrapped up the conversation by saying that there is a void from business owners in the workforce space, in terms of development, and this committee should be used to slowly eat away at the workforce problem from business owners themselves.

Daniel Isaac then introduced himself as the CEO of J.K. Adams in Dorset, Vermont.

Robynn Albert introduced herself as the Marketing and Training Manager at Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center (VMEC).

The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted by Abby Rhim.

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Abby Rhim, Executive Assistant, Vermont State Workforce Development Board